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LETTER

TO THE

CLERGY

OF

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

BY MARK BLAKE, ESQ.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

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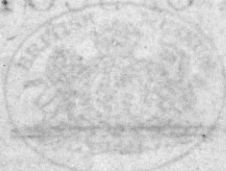
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THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



BY MARK BLAIR, ESQ.

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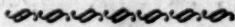
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M.DCCC.XCIV.

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LETTER, &c.



AS the Sword of the Gospel has been, in latter-times, blunted in your hands, it is doubtless very important to whet it upon politics—and with what ardour you have sounded the charge will remain a lasting memorial of the acuteness of your understandings, as well as the vigour of your lungs. I congratulate our party on the vast accession of genius and faith, which you have brought us. Woe to the infidel who disputes your ability to support a falling state; such incredulity deserves no sign, but that of Nineveh.

As every exploit in this sanctified warfare merits infinitely more glory than is the portion of temporal heroes, I would count it impiety to be silent on the distinguished honour which one of your brethren, the Rev. Mr. B——, acquired, on occasion of the great battle lately fought against sedition. That able Coadjutor, after conjuring up the furies to his aid, made the attack with infinite fervour and spirit; at every thrust he dealt remorse and conviction, and brandishing aloft the gleaming sword of vengeance, he finished with this irresistible argument, “the apostles submitted with patience

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and resignation to the tyranny of Nero and Caligula," and will you grieve under the best administration that the mind of man ever conceived? It was not without indignation that I observed some of the audience, with a sarcastic smile on their countenances during this pious appeal; doubtless they were reformers, who laugh at the heroic patience of the apostles;—and I have since been told that this was actually the case. Several of them too, I am informed, have the impudence to find fault with some anachronisms and grammatical errors which they pretended to discover in the discourse. Such miscreants merit exemplary punishments. I cannot think it possible that this Rev. Gentleman's immaculate composition can have given hold to such presumptuous sneers; be that as it may, they ought to know, and be it hereby known, that you are not subjected to the servile laws of history, chronology, grammar, nor reason. The weapons of your warfare are spiritual, and not carnal—and your divine mission ought to put a gag in the mouth of every gainfayer.—I have often wished to myself that the fire of Elijah was at your command, for sure there are ample subjects to employ it on in this age of disaffection and rebellion to authority, both spiritual and temporal. It is however a consolation that some relics of the thunder of Jove is left in your voices, which, as in the case alluded to, serves to confound all but the most incorrigible malcontents; the words of the Rev. Gentleman, whilst they conveyed terror, breathed the meekness of a lamb, and in my opinion should be engraven in letters of gold.

One circumstance alone gives me pain, the more so,

as it is apt to produce, in the minds of the vulgar, an opinion of your fallibility. Can it be believed, there are goats amongst the sheep? Pity that unanimity is not established in so glorious a cause, with such an example too before them as the great Sachaverell, and at a time when the sacriligious rage of the people for their rights has subsided, some of these preachers have been even so wicked and factious as to apply the law of nature and reason to politics; this conduct deserves no mercy, especially after the proclamation, so graciously promulgated, they should share the fate of the Priests of Baal, without benefit of clergy. I have carefully perused the public prints, in expectation of finding, that the arms of these foolish disciples of reason had been withered in the act of extending them in such a cause. The only shadow of excuse which in my great mildness I could ever frame for their temerity was, that, as they are chiefly dissenters, they were not on full pay. No soldiers will fight with spirit unless well provided for—might it not be a politic scheme to embody these irregular troops? You have the advantage of being able to measure the probable effect from experience. I am one of those who rejoice to see merit rewarded, and it was with inexpressible satisfaction I heard that most of you are likely to reap the fruit of your labours on this side of time; for though the greatest share is to come afterwards, yet as the object is so distant, it is prudent to grasp as much as possible on the present stage. It is upon this account that I rejoice to see you aspire, in your matrimonial engagements to the possession of this one thing needfull. It makes a

mighty difference in your discourses—where I can readily distinguish the effect of a low watry diet, from the operation of the pure juice of the grape, I trust for this, and many other reasons, you will pursue the scheme of augmentation with becoming perseverance ; the president knows your value, and you will obtain it. Oh! that for a reward adequate to your merit, the ancient dignities of our Church were revived ; the flame of your genius would be fanned by the gentle breezes in the road of promotion. But in this case I would warn you against the use of the tythe-pigs ; for I am informed that they obstruct the perspiration, and consequently damp the genius. In this view I don't know but you are better without the pigs ; for you might be tempted to imitate the dignitaries in England, most of whom are transformed into real pigs.

I have no doubt but all of you have read Burke, the study of that luminary cannot be sufficiently inculcated—not on the sublime, for you are already sufficiently in the clouds—the conduct of that great man principally claims your regard—the brandishing of the dagger may be of great service with the most untameable of your audience, for though your words may be as a two-edged sword, yet sensible objects demonstrate sincerity.

I cannot forbear, on this occasion, from reciting a conversation I had lately with a reformer. I was recounting the mighty advantages which were to ensue from your co-operation. On which he exclaimed, “ the discordant notes of politics are sounded through
“ the evangelical trumpet, and as the music partakes
“ of

“ of the instrument this phenomenon exhibits the resemblance of a Highland bag-piper attempting Italian tunes. O! ye consecrated bands of auxiliaries, who hath counselled this crusade? you are certainly “ in some cases more possessed than inspired;” but on this occasion, whatever may be said, you cannot be accused of blindness to temporal interest, which you justly consider as a step to the spiritual. Let the sceptics on this point recollect, that a considerable part of the patronage of the Church is directly in the Crown, and nearly all the remainder in the hands of persons devoted to it—but above all, let it be known, that the augmentation of your salaries may be easily effected by Government, notwithstanding the opposition of your parishioners, who consider that the richer you become, the less attention you will bestow on your charge. Is it then to be doubted what part you should adopt? I know that there are a few of your number, who have sufficient virtue to resist the impulse of interest; but it would belie human nature were many such found. Patriotism is, in some sort a selfish passion at the best, it is the desire of the happiness of the country of which we are members, but when it is, as in the majority of cases, confined to the desire of our own particular interest, it degenerates, and does not merit the name of patriotism.

It is probable, that the most of you have never taken the trouble of carrying your views in this respect beyond the verge of the privileges of your own order at farthest. The question of Reform is not to be decided upon such grounds. Faith, that subtile principle, a grain of which

enables to remove mountains—faith, that sacred germ, with which it has not pleased the divinity to impregnate the whole human race, the operation of which has superseded the use of reason, and exploded the dictates of nature, is the weapon of your warfare; but politics demand the application of reason. I grant, that if they had required the use of faith, or sophistry, you would have had the best title to enter the lists; but it is consonant to our ideas of the divine œconomy, that when the plastic hand marked the inapplicability of faith to subjects like politics, naturally in the province of reason, it thereby meant to prohibit the interference of the Clergy, in objects of temporal concern. I therefore intreat your reverences to beat your swords into pruning-hooks, that you may reap in peace the evangelical harvest. But if you will still be Quixotic enough to go so far in quest of adventures, you must expect to meet sometimes with rencontres of an unpleasant kind. Truth will find advocates, who, unappalled by persecution, will stand forth to assert her rights—the founders of that Reform, in virtue of which you stand in the pulpit, encountered a more formidable interest than yours; and it seems to be the fate of every innovation which the progress of society renders necessary, to experience a formidable opposition from the partizans of adopted systems. But it is my consolation, that truth has ever prevailed over the most powerful combinations,—it is only by cool reflection upon its errors, that the human mind is at length conducted to truth, and when the mist of prejudice

dices is removed, it looks back with surprise at having tolerated so great absurdities.

Could we at once burst the bands of prejudice, and spring from the rubbish of adopted systems, latent springs of happiness would develop their influence, and shed a new luster on the human race. We should no longer behold nations debased by the hand of tyranny, nor fostered in superstition by a rampart priesthood. Mankind would start up and demand back their imprescriptible rights, so unjustly ravished from them, and wonder that they had been the instruments of fettering the hands of their brothers. This is the Aurora of reason, which will rise to the noon of felicity; this is that radical Reform, which the Clergy have always opposed, and thus the fall of Adam would be repaired, in the proportion that reason bears to faith.

The question of Reform is now become trite, it has been handled by many abler advocates than myself, but the disrepute into which it has fallen, and the aspect of affairs constantly varying in some points, challenge our attention, to enquire if Reform be a phantom, or has some intrinsic value—and whether we have attained, or are likely to attain the object of the war, if there were really any object. *Salus Populi Suprema lex.* That the good of the people is the supreme law, is the first axiom in the law of nations. Governments may here see the end of their establishment, and the condition on which they ought alone to govern. This divine law could not fail to excite remorse in the breasts of Kings if the good of the people were not swallowed up in

in the love of themselves, and if guilty ministers were not at hand to counteract the workings of nature.

The better to clear up the point we have in view, I shall premise, that impartial persons of good sense will make large deductions from opinions coming from any interested quarter: this is of great consequence, and I earnestly intreat all my country-men, who aim at the discovery of truth, to make allowances for this variation least they be wrecked on the shoals of error.

This may serve to appreciate the credit, to which the alarm excited about eighteen months ago was entitled. It emanated from government, and instantly infected the stockholder,—who deprecated an enquiry into our situation, lest it should lower the value of his tenure.—The landholder, who dreaded that his property the most fixed, might be brought in aid, the placeman and pensioner, lest their services might be contrasted with their rewards—the clergy feared the downfall of superstition, whence they derive such great revenues. The voters apprehended, that, by the extension of this privilege, their consequence might suffer. The soldier was caught by his loyalty, and finally, the reasons of the tax-gatherers are not difficult to be seen. These, with a herd of their dependents and connections, overpowered in this instance the sense of the people. They succeeded in alarming the nation for its liberties, when it sought to recover its rights. At that period I expected, from the reputed good sense of the nation, that it would have seen the bait; and that the people would have ascertained whether there were real ground of danger; but I was disappointed. The majority

majority of the nation rushed heedlessly under the banners of the throne, and gave new wings to the power which for ages their ancestors had sought to confine. Mark the consequence: this step has been construed into an approbation of a war, into which there is an appearance of its having been determined to plunge us, in order to avoid the discussion of the question. But I proceed to the point itself. Is there occasion for Reform? this is demanding if the science of government has attained with us every improvement of which human nature renders it susceptible, and if the whole extent of this knowledge has been applied to what is called our constitution.

To procure a satisfactory result to this enquiry, we should investigate impartially our progress in the science of government, and having ascertained our situation, we should compare it with reason. I cannot here stay to give more than a rapid sketch—but which I trust will be unassailable by quibble, and serve to draw a certain conclusion. The ancient Germans and northern nations to whom we principally owe our origin, were free people; in peace they were ruled by their assemblies, and in war, they chose a chief to conduct them. When these nations subverted the Roman Empire they found too much land to occupy; on the same plan, as in their ancient habitations, they therefore granted large portions of the new conquests to many of their warriors, on conditions of their defending it; these tenants became thus vassals to the state, and there, in imitation to this practice, subdivided their possessions on the same conditions. This

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is the origin of the feudal system, which in its vigour was well calculated for defence, and though differing from their former state, was yet favourable to liberty; but in time these conquerors forgot the manners of their ancestors. The conquests were split into many communities, and their chiefs rendered themselves hereditary. They had early embraced the Christian religion, of which the Clergy taking advantage saddled them with the basest superstition. It was a striking contrast to see valour bending the neck to the yoke of stupid priests.

The revival of learning, and the introduction of commerce, successively shocked the feudal system; numerous abuses had crept into it, it had reached its period of decline. The manners of mankind had suffered alteration. The kings turned this circumstance to the increase of their power, they detached the people from the chieftains, and in most countries succeeded in establishing complete despotism on the ruins of both. Happily for this country, though the authority of the chieftains was reduced, the virtue of our ancestors preserved the people from the full extent of such a destiny. We are indebted for this to our parliaments, which nourished in the people the memory of their ancient independence, and excited them to stem the torrent of tyranny. The spark of liberty was preserved, and burst out into a flame in America, which has communicated to France, and promises to illuminate the world; but we are not to expect that liberty has been handed down to us in the most perfect form; through the convulsions it has sustained, it was fortunate to escape

escape the fate of that of our neighbouring co-originals, and reach us in any shape. The struggles of our ancestors, repressed the invasion of it sometimes more successfully than at others; hence the irregularity of its figure, hence the fundamental defects which shall presently be pointed out.

Had our ancestors, when they called over William of Orange, foreseen what consequences would follow from suffering the power of declaring war to remain in his hands, they would have retrenched this regal prerogative, if they had seen the corruption and intrigue arising from the contraction of the elective franchise by the mouldering of some boroughs, and the growth of others; in short, if they had had extensive views of the effects of wealth applied to elections, they would have fixed Representation on a basis which would have secured it against decay. That these are defects of a serious nature, dire experience has taught us, and I above all desire attention whilst I impartially relate some of the consequences.

It had formerly been the practice of our ancestors in time of war to pay the expences in proportion as they were incurred. William brought more refined notions of business from Holland, he invented the funding system, by which a nation borrows money to carry on a war, by mortgaging its revenues. A scheme which for ruinous consequences may vie with the most diabolical which the mind of man ever brought forth; for though in a war strictly defensive, there is no question but the whole property of the nation is at its disposal, as well as its inhabitants; it is a manifest deception

tion to entail the accumulated expences of all wars upon succeeding generations, it is no less than leaving them an inheritance of misery ; in as much as their industry is mortgaged for its payment. Justice required at least that the expences should have been paid at the conclusion of each war ; for it is folly to think that we can bind posterity to the payment of our debts, or that we ought to pay those of our ancestors, were we able to do so.—It is prodigality to make new wars, and leave the payment to our children, who may have enough to do with their own affairs without being loaded with the expence of our folly.

Is there no room to be left for wars of absolute necessity, in the midst of so many unnecessary wars ? Every war we make, clips the wings of both ourselves and our posterity. But this system is chiefly ruinous by the facility which it confers of carrying on wars of any kind: the Prince is thereby less scrupulous about the cause, and the people are misled with respect to the magnitude of the evil. Accordingly we have found the most bloody and expensive contests undertaken for the possession of barren countries, where there is scarcely an inhabitant—we have seen three millions expended for a few huts on the north west of America, and nearly the same sum to induce a power, supposed to be our enemy, to relinquish the possession of a town at the extremity of Europe ; and when this power showed a contempt of the consequences by a refusal to accede to our demands, we gave up the pretensions.—This same nation, by a sudden change of system, is become our ally, and has, in conjunction with another of our allies,

allies, devoured almost intire an inoffensive nation without our making the smallest movement.

Were a reckoning to take place at the conclusion of each campaign, and a proportionate share of the wealth of the nation taken to pay the expence, those herds of wealthy flatterers, who, on occasion of every war, whatever be its justice, promise to support it with life and fortune, would change their tone. Since they are so prodigal of their fortunes, let them be thrown into the gulph of the national debt.

Let us now observe our present situation. The operation of the above cause has heaped on our heads two hundred and eighty millions of debt, and the nation is burthened with an annual taxation of about eighteen millions to pay the interest thereof, and defray the expences of Government, which have kept pace with the increase of this debt. This is our peace expenditure, from which no reduction is said to be feasible; for the funding system contrives that the expences of war are not felt by the people during the continuance, any more than in peace, except by the scarcity of money which the influx into the treasury occasions, and which is a gulph that devours the substance of the nation.

It is now above a century since William opened this box of Pandora, which has set us at enmity with the world; and in this time we have, at an average, spent upwards of three millions annually above our revenue. Will any impartial person say that this prodigality, so big with ultimate ruin, has not its source in a defect, when it has produced such constantly malignant effects
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for a century? yet it does not appear to have made that impression; for ministers seem resolved to pursue the mad career! from the consequences of which I would turn away with horror. But I am afraid the sooner we look our situation in the face the better. It is certain that it will not bear a continuance—and whoever does not see a necessity for putting a stop to it, must be destitute of the common ideas of prudence. I am indeed surprised at the apathy of some on this point, and the effrontery of others in defending it, by the most villainous methods, as in calumniating persons who have sense enough to desire a cure of the evil. They have the audacity to preach up the Constitution, whilst they are undermining it. They persecute its friends to quash every enquiry, and brand the advocates of Reform with the epithets of *sedition*, and disaffection to certain personages:—for my part I am not deterred by this from exercising my imprescriptible rights of canvassing the concerns of that society of which I am a member. I have nothing to do with persons of any kind; I am convinced the effect is in the machine, which is obvious from a delineation of its effects, that can be traced to their source—the great spring of which is our inadequate representation, the most undefined mass of inequalities that can be figured; for the Crown, the Treasury, the Peerage, and a few individuals, return a majority of the House of Commons; and in those places, where a shadow of popular election is preserved, they are a prey to the most notorious bribery and corruption.

How different from the manner of our ancient representatives,

representatives, who were paid for their services? Many have asked what reward the moderns reaped, to stimulate them to such avidity for seats. You may see it in the places and posts to which our extensive taxations and expences give birth;—it is not supposeable that the candidates would throw away their money without the expectation of a return;—no, votes to ministerial measures are supposed to be bartered for these appointments. But let these be reduced, the elective franchise extended, and the duration of Parliament shortened—you would no longer see these tumults at elections which disgrace them; the country's weal is not the objects of these riots, it is a desire to prey on her vitals. It cannot be denied, Britons, that they take the price of your blood from your own pockets. Take away the power of bribery from ministers, and these vultures will disappear;—you will then have representatives to whom you can look with confidence, men of patriotism and wisdom, who will probe our situation, and apply the remedy which our wounds demand.

It is natural to enquire what our objects have been in the wars since William's days, in which upwards of a million of our countrymen have perished in the field, and what we have obtained for this prodigality of blood and treasure, for enterprizes so far outstripping those of our ancestors, would suppose either a perpetual combination against our existence, or motives of gain infinitely superior—neither of these is the fact. I am afraid, for the honour of my country, that we are to seek for the origin of those undertakings, by which we
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have waded through blood to ruin, in restless dispositions of our government, unbridled by public justice ; and in that false system, which regards the destruction of other nations, as so much gain to ourselves. No wonder then, that other nations only saw their safety in our humiliation, of which we received a severe lesson during the American war. That collision, by which the flame of liberty was increased tenfold, that impotent attempt against freedom, by which our national debt received an addition of a hundred millions, and in which two hundred thousand of our countrymen were cut off in the bloom of youth.

We found another incentive to war in our claim to holders of the balance of power. Knight-errants of this system, we could never want adventures, and varying our objects at every moment as affairs appeared through this false medium. We could never want weighty reasons for subsidizing the half of Europe to exterminate the other. Our vanity taught us to believe ourselves infinitely more interested in the affairs of Europe, than any other nation ; whereas, our irregular situation rendered us less so. There will be no security for this balance of power, untill the scale of justice shall be hung up in every government by a reduction of their principles to reason and the law of nature. This is a stronger guarantee of peace than the arms of Great Britain, and there exist one happy nation at least, which for two centuries has felt its influence. The springs being rectified, on this solid basis, the principles of defence will be strengthened, in such a degree, as to baffle every effort of tyranny. And the principle

principle offence regulated so as to preclude the attempt itself. Political justice is the moral of nations, and reciprocal interest will then promote a general acquiescence in it.

There are some who pretend, that it was impracticable to avoid these quarrels. This is the excuse of every quarrelsome person in society, with whom, in the moment of passion, it is vain to argue. The most stinging reproach on their conduct is the example of the more peaceable. What, are we obliged to consume ourselves in endeavours to crush others? They must be very bad neighbours indeed, if we have always justice on our side; but the truth is, they retort the argument with double force, and thus destruction proceeds, whilst justice is buried in the quarrel, and the law of the strongest takes place.

For example, is there any urgent call on this nation to watch over the balance of power in Hindostan, and to interfere in the quarrels of the princes of that country? No more than the Spaniards had to exterminate the Peruvians. Alas! the balance of power is prostituted to the cause of oppression, and is frequently a blind to cover ambitious designs, originating in ignorance of our real interests. Were this not the case, the fate of Poland would have attracted more attention. How can it indeed be otherwise, when a few persons, who have the vanity to think the world is made for them, possess uncontrouled dominion over the lives and property of mankind.

There are others foolish enough to believe, that this waste of blood and treasure, and all its concomitants,

are no ways injurious to our prosperity. If this were true, the funding system would be one of the sublimest inventions of modern times. It would follow, that war might be carried on to any extent, without costing one farthing. Schemes of domestic improvement might be undertaken in like manner at no expence. Unhappily this new philosopher's stone is but a chimera. To prove it, let us suppose that Great Britain should spend two hundred and eighty millions in an attempt to join France and England by an isthmus. This undertaking would repay no part of the expence, and would be totally useless: we should thereby be so much poorer; our money would be gone, and our loss would not be lessened, by employing our own workmen, because they would thereby be withdrawn from other employments, such as agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, which would repay them for their labour.

This is precisely the state of the national debt, it is a pure loss; and not only the capital, but all the interest which has been paid upon it, as well as the compound interest of this sum; which altogether will form an amount beyond conception; but, it is not the gold and silver, those representatives of value, which is to be deplored. We are to lament the loss of the labour of the society, its real wealth which has been squandered upon unproductive objects. Had these two hundred and eighty millions been vested in agriculture, commerce and manufactures, the increase of it would have diffused ample prosperity through every part of the kingdom, the country would have been a vast garden, as populous as China, and this multitude peaceful and happy.

happy. But it will be said, though this debt is incurred, it is not paid. Perhaps it never will, but this does not diminish the national loss, the money has been expended irrecoverably upon military preparations, subsidies, and other expences, which will never repay the labour. This is the millstone round our necks, which threatens to sink the industry of the nation. Eighteen millions of taxes paid by labour to idleness, are daily increasing, and though their operation is not fully perceived, they form a lee current which engulphs our prosperity. Hence the multiplication of paupers—hence the increase of indolence, the poison of society. Humanity cries for the efforts of every description of men to arrest the progress of ruin: if we are deaf to the calls of pecuniary consideration, which in our nation is the axis of power, will our hearts be hardened against the melancholy recital of the thousands of our brothers who are offered upon the altar of folly—to the lamentations of the unhappy widows, and the cries of the unfortunate orphans. If our feelings are callous to these, the time does not appear far distant when dire necessity will compel our attention. The system cannot be long pursued. No other people on earth of equal numbers, could by any mode of taxation pay the same sum. Our industry and wealth, whilst though heavily loaded, is far above the level of other nations, and on this account we have more reason to fear their depreciation, if not positively, at least relatively, which has the same effect.

If unfortunately the decline of the value of our industry, should, as there is reason to apprehend, disable

us from paying the increased taxations, the cobweb would burst. What do I say? are we not then arrived at the situation in which the unfortunate Louis of France was placed; when he was compelled to call together the States-General. Reform so often refused, may be no longer possible; the virulent opposition which its supporters encountered, has excited a spirit of enquiry in every class of persons, and if my information be just, the reforming principles is fast pervading the whole of the disinterested part of the community; but there is room to dread that they will not stop here; it is vain to conceal it, downright republicanism is the road which many of these persons have taken; and reiterated refusal of a rational Reform may drive the whole ensuing part of the nation much further than they would otherwise have gone.

It is obvious, that the war is a desperate remedy against Reform, supposing it to be an evil instead of a good, for it exasperates those who have already embraced the cause of Reform, and by impoverishing the nation, excites discontent—a large step towards Reform. The means adopted for the prevention of reform, have recoiled upon the projectors, and assist its cause most powerfully. Humanity will however drop a tear, that its cause has been served at the expence of so much blood, and of the happiness of this Island.

I decline penetrating the veil which overspreads the consequences of persisting in the refusal of Reform; for I would not be said to brood over the miseries of my country, which I earnestly deprecate. Whatever be-tide us, I trust, that on all occasions humanity will
 preside;

preside: for I know, that persons of pure intentions may be deceived. By the present system, the attention of Government is so strongly pointed to foreign contests, and foreign interests, that domestic improvement, that corner-stone of prosperity, is considered only in a secondary view. The *Amor Patriæ* is extinguished in our deadly feuds, and there remains no time for a simplification of the laws, so necessary.

War is a general evil; it is felt by a re-action in all the European nations, when it happens in one. The present war has disabled the continental nations from paying our manufacturers. Hence the stagnation of trade, by which the wealth of thousands is absorbed, and the national revenues decreased. These effects demonstrate the necessity of a guarantee against war, except on a just national ground of a Reform, which shall place the power of inflicting the wound in the hands of those who feel the smart, which shall strike off the head of the hydra corruption, and which shall revise and simplify the laws.

If we were to take the question in the abstract, society is in a state of constant progression; and a wise government will recognize the necessity of keeping pace in its form, and in its principles of action, with the intention of knowledge, lest it drag the nation backwards in the path of improvement. Laws and government were made for men, and not men for laws and government—these should go hand in hand with the state of society. We are far beyond the savages which the Carthaginians found in Britain, though we may be their descendants; nor are we of the same dispositions,

as previous to the Norman Conquest, or even prior to the American war. Reflection upon that event, and others, had shown us our errors; and where errors are pointed out, in any system, it is a proof that we are not yet arrived there at the *ne plus ultra*. Why then are they not rectified immediately?

Our present minister, in a stormy period, stood up the champion of this Reform; and, at this day, when in power, he waves the measures, on the very ground of its being a stormy period. But I challenge him in the name of the people of Great Britain, whose confidence he abuses, to come forward and state the reason, why this measure, upon which his former popularity was founded, was not carried into execution during the ten years of profound tranquillity, which succeeded his elevation. By declining an explanation of this circumstance, he will create a suspicion, not only that his own motives were personal, but also that the nation is never to expect that any proposal of this nature will gain the assent of ministry.

An attachment to precedent in politics is the reason, that whilst Newtons and Bacons have ages since carried the torch of truth into remote subjects, it is only a few years, that a book on commercial policy, worthy of the literary reputation of the nation, has seen the light. I speak not to the interested in the continuance of abuses. I do not flatter myself that they will be convinced by any thing that can be said. Nothing short of a miracle could operate the conversion of a certain judge, who, by a speech, replete with passion and folly, betrayed his ignorance of the true interests
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of the country. I will however venture to recommend to him an inquiry into the sources of the revenue, that he may be better prepared to speak with consistency on the subject, the next time he chooses to broach it. If this has the approbation of the impartial, I shall be consoled. Let them join their influence to those few virtuous men, who are nobly opposing a barrier to the devastation of war, and standing up for the purification of the body politic, and their joint efforts in the cause of humanity cannot fail in the issue to prove effectual. Let it not be said that whilst it is easy to find faults, it is difficult to supply them: the case does not resemble an occult disease in the human frame, of which we may be ignorant of the nature and the remedy. The object is cognoscible, by reason, which clearly points out its errors, that only required to be rectified, an operation extremely simple, and such as would be recommended to an individual, whose profligate and thoughtless conduct threatened ruin to his affairs. His servants, who enjoy benefit from his extravagance, might indeed pervert the good counsels of his friends, by malicious insinuations of the diminution of his glory and worldly consideration which would flow from any retrenchment: it is possible even his *chaplain* might join the combination, which however would not detract from the merit of his counsellors, nor the necessity of the measure.

It must be confessed, that though Great Britain has at different periods made several glorious efforts to repress the encroachments of power, they rather bear the marks of momentary passion and impatience, than of a

well understood, and steady attachment to liberty. Even in the appeal to arms which was followed by the death of Charles I. they seem to have had no fixed point in view. The death of the monarch was rather the effect of personal hatred, than of a detestation of tyranny, and when they had laid low both Crown and Mitre, instead of employing themselves in forming a constitution adapted to their circumstances, they submitted to the military government of Cromwell, under which they bended till his death. The imbecillity of his son Richard suggested the idea of recalling Charles II. to whom they confided the same powers as his father had possessed, and his government proved worse. Were these two personages, or James II. culpable? certainly, yet, as kings are but men, it was the interest of the people to have established a prevention of evil, when they had the power.

When William of Orange came over, he was glad to receive the Crown on any conditions, but he obtained it on terms very little different from the person they had just chased away, and in return he embroiled us in all the quarrels of the Continent, and laid the foundation of evils which have since proved inveterate, and still annoy the vitals of liberty. We were not yet sufficiently taught by experience, when the house of Brunswick ascended the Throne, and at this day we reap the fruit of the neglect.

Great Britain seems to have fallen asleep in the road to political perfection; her lethargic members appear incapable of the free motion of those as a body in health: they exhibit the most striking contrast of credulity

dulity and apathy in politics, and sagacity in other parts of human knowledge that is to be found. Let us ply with vigour, lest we be shipwrecked at the entrance of the haven.

There was a time when the proud distinction of freemen raised us in our ideas above all nations.—Whence comes it, that we are now jealous of an addition to the same great brotherhood, and that we league with tyrants to overthrow the temple of liberty.

We are now engaged in a war, carried on by an extensive confederation, of which we are become the cement, for the purpose of imposing on an independent nation a government which they detest—though the undertaking is doubtless a violation of the law of nations on the part of Austria and Prussia. Yet our ministry represent us to stand upon different ground, in consequence of some decrees of the French Convention declaratory of their inclination to assist any people who might wish to shake off the yoke of tyranny. This is the only point upon which any semblance of our right to an interference in internal affairs could at all be founded; for their invasion of the Netherlands, and throwing open the Scheldt, whatever right it might communicate to declare war, gave none to interfere in the alteration of their government. Were enterprises of this nature to be undertaken on slight grounds, we should incur the risk of retaliation at every moment, and the rage for destruction would be multiplied.

It will be a difficult task to prove that the French had Great Britain in view in the declaration above-mentioned, for they had until then shewn no marks
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of ill will towards this country; on the contrary, they placed us in the rank of free nations, and cherished the prospect of an alliance with us, which should afterwards guarantee the reign of peace; the decree itself, at the worst, only attacked tyranny, though it must be acknowledged, not warranted by the law of nations, unless upon the principle of retaliation; which Austria and Prussia, the aggressors, well deserved. But if our ministry reckoned us in the number of free nations, by what reasoning could they apply against us a blow levelled only against tyrants? It was surely safer to accept the Olive Branch tendered in their renunciation of conquest. There is a degree of absurdity in the supposition of the French entertaining a wish to increase their enemies, at a time when they were engaged with several very formidable powers. Accordingly we find it refuted, by their respecting the neutrality of Switzerland, Genoa, America, Denmark, Sweden, and all other nations pacifically inclined.

With regard to the invasion of the Netherlands, the French acted as every other nation would do in a similar case. The Duke of Brunswick had entered France, with the avowed intention of subduing the country, and restoring the ancient despotism. Would any man in his senses dispute the right of the French, after being so fortunate as to repulse him, to pursue him as far as possible? This would be the same as telling the master of a house, attacked by robbers, that he was to pursue them only to the threshold. But it will be said, We are guaranties of the Netherlands to

the House of Austria, and therefore could not look on and see it conquered.

I must here observe, that when the French invaded Belgia, they did not conquer it for themselves, but erected it into an independent sovereignty, put arms into the hands of the people, and promised to support them against the Austrians; a proceeding more generous than the underhand rebellion which our Government stirred up about three years before in that country, and which they afterwards abandoned to its fate when their ends were served. It was by the authority of these new Belgian states that the Scheldt was declared open; and when we insisted that the French should shut it, their Ambassador at London, Chauvelin, declared, that if the Belgic states had no objections it might be done—surely it would have been but prudence to have waited their ultimatum. Is this point founded on a mischievous monopoly, a sufficient reason for deluging Europe with blood?—may the Scheldt be rather dried up, and with it all the rivers in Europe.

But the war has another cause. Whilst these negotiations were pending, the French brought their unfortunate King to the scaffold. Our ministry had all along behaved with such haughtiness, as could only be accounted for by their determination upon an open rupture as soon as they were ready for it; but the above circumstance threw them into a passion, and they ordered Chauvelin to depart. If this be not a declaration of war, it warrants a declaration of war on the part of the nation they treated. If ministers are irascible, it should only be in their private dispositions: for they
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are highly culpable when they make the conduct of the nation resemble that of a passionate person, where the lives and properties of thousands are at stake ; and in this instance, more than two hundred thousand victims have been immolated on the tomb of one man, with whom we had no concern. I cannot therefore find any just ground for the war—why then did our ministry show a disposition to bring it on. Some persons, who ought to know, say, that it was necessary to have a foreign, to avoid an intestine war. This is conceding at once that we are the aggressors with respect to the French. But our minister, whilst he held out the danger from within, maintained that the war with France is purely defensive, he will find it extremely difficult to prove either of these positions. However, we may say with truth, that if there was really any ground for alarm, it is multiplied by the operation of the foreign war ; and if ministry are the causes of the foreign war, they incur the risk of bringing on two wars, where little was to be apprehended.

The public mind had been previously prepared for these events, by Reeves' and other associations, and prevented by those worthless and time-serving prints, the echo of ministers, who continually poured out a torrent of scurrility against the French. When the war began, the French penetrated into Holland ; this was preached up as a proof that they did so before its commencement : and so credulous were the people on this head, that it was hardly disputed. The subsequent events have proved that it is not with us a defensive war, if there were occasion for that proof. The Scheldt

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is now shut: not a single neutral keel plows its bosom: and this being considered as the ground of the war, the object was obtained. But we have since entered into new and extensive subsidiary treaties, and united ourselves to those who fought the overthrow of France, in the face of a pacific overture from that country. Such is our ardour for destruction, that we have insulted every neutral nation in our endeavours to force them to join our cause. The ministry have strived to monopolize the article of corn, of which we had no occasion, in order to produce a famine in France; and feeling the vanity of the attempt, they have ventured to seize the vessels of neutral nations on the high seas, on the mere suspicion of their being destined for that country. These measures, so contrary to the law of nations, cannot fail to procure us new enemies, whose resentments may be felt at a future period, if not at present.

Upon the whole, Can justice be recognized in this war of opinion; or is there an impartial person who does not pronounce it to be replete with folly at the close of the eighteenth century, even were the finances of the kingdom in a situation to make the experiment safe on that score? but, when I regard our situation in this respect, I confess that I tremble for the issue.

Our national debt has shot up to an astonishing height on a narrow basis, and these storms threaten to overturn it. The enemies case is different, and their credit too extensive to be shaken by earthquakes. Considering this as a war for existence, they have at command every man and every species of property. Money is with them a very inferior consideration; men, iron, clothes,

clothes, provisions, and gunpowder are their only requisities. But money is the axis of the success of their invaders—without it they cannot stir; besides, the principles of warfare are by no means equal. Discipline is the main spring of the combined armies; to this the French oppose an enthusiasm, which has already, when their discipline was very inferior, proved, in many instances, an overmatch, for the best discipline, and the first military talents in the world.

What will it be when the old troops of the combined armies are cut off, and raw soldiers appointed in their stead? for the French are daily improving in discipline, in the interior. May it not then be apprehended that their enemies may sink under the inferiority of their principle of warfare? besides, it is not an army, but an armed nation with whom they have to contend: the facility with which the French send recruits to the field, and the great distance of their invaders, must alone ultimately secure them repulses. It would therefore be wisdom to secure a peace, and preserve their strength as an equipoise against the enterprises of a wicked woman, who, actuated by unjust ambition, threatens to keep alive the flame of war while she remains on earth.

But with whom shall we make peace, if we were willing? the answer is so obvious—it could only be mistaken by the simple or ill intentioned. If ever you make peace at all, it must be with those who direct the blows against you, were they even Tartars. But I suppose we must leave the practical part of it to the King of Prussia, who seems cooler than our ministry; and it is likely we shall soon follow, to give the lie to
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our own assertions of the impossibility of treating with the Convention. But will peace be preserved? The longer it is deferred, it will be kept the worse: there is a risk that France, every day more inured to war, may, by its continuance, resemble a military nation that, in antiquity, conquered the world—but the law of nations points out a method for such a case—"a truce." Or when peace happens, disband regiment for regiment with your enemy. But some want an indemnification. This, too, is becoming impracticable in proportion to the expence incurred. But can France indemnify you, if she were willing? Many would be content with a few islands; but a continent would not indemnify you.

Is the strength of Great Britain increased by the possession of Bengal? Does it, at its own expence, march its jetty hords to your assistance against France? No; the concentration and increase of your population and industry is your effective strength. The supplying of America with manufactures is more beneficial, and braces more vigorously our national strength, than the possession of the Mines of Peru does that of Spain.

I do not hesitate to pronounce the whole colonial system disadvantageous to the nation; though some individuals gain fortunes by it, it is at the expence of the national prosperity. There is no colony in the world that, at the long run, defrays its expence; I will not except our East India possessions; and experience will soon make it appear more clearly.

Amidst such mighty objects, the Clergy are but insects—but I beg pardon of their Reverences for having lost sight of them. I have seen several of their productions

tions on occasion of the late Fast. They seem all to have built on a foundation which, though it may be strictly theological, is absurd when applied to human action. They unanimously refer the war to the hand of an avenging deity, and most of them consider the desire of Reform as the cause of this scourge. But when the human hand is seen so plainly in the business—it is idle to go further. Let the remedy be applied there, and we may depend upon not being far from the mark.

The Clergy, by means of their predestinarian notions, wish to divert our attention from the real authors—perhaps, considering the load too weighty for man, they transfer it to God. And as they can make bolder on this subject than I wish to do, they presume, by a sophistical consequence of this sophistical position, that Reform is disagreeable to the Divine Being—a man of plain sense would figure to himself, that improvement of every kind were agreeable to him. And we may venture to affirm, that this Reform would have precluded the war itself.

Let the Clergy confine themselves to the cure of souls upon rational principles; and forgetting the croaking of these frogs, let the nation press forward in the path of happiness and prosperity. Let this road be cleared from the mountainous obstacles which the want of Reform throws in the way. Thus shall we tower to the summit of humanity, and our Government be handed down purified to the latest ages.

Here the Reformer finished his long winded dissertation, which raised, in my mind, the strongest emotion of indignation. As nothing but divine power can
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silence these miscreants, I leave him to your Reverences, doubting not that you are already itching to chastise him, which I beseech you to do, not in the spirit of meekness, but with scorpions. It is presumption in me to suggest any thing to such learned persons, but in my opinion you should deal with him according to the major excommunication, for it is dangerous in the extreme to foster such vipers in the bosom of Holy Church. Such seducing discourses would corrupt the *very elect*; and if unluckily your flock should have recourse to that dangerous weapon which he calls REASON, not one of them would pay implicit obedience to your judgement. What a lamentable prospect, Rev. Gentlemen, to see your parishioners carrying their enquiries into your conduct by the light of this conflagration.

I conjure you to anathematize this accursed plant called *Reason*; for though you have given it many fatal blows, the hydra requires to have its heads lopt off anew. These Reformers, Rev. Gentlemen, spring up like locusts—and it is to the influence of Reason that I ascribe it.

I invoke ample success on your hallowed arms, sanctified warriors, and am,

Reverend Gentlemen,

Your Well Wisher,

MARK BLAKE.

P. S.

P. S. I omitted to mention that another Reformer, on the same occasion, vented his spleen against Russia and Prussia for their late appropriation of Poland. He said, that when that country, a Republic, transformed itself into a monarchy, the above powers, upon pretence of restoring *Republicanism*, swallowed up three-fourths of the kingdom, alledging, that democratical principles were the result of monarchy. He then compared this conduct with that of the same powers towards France where they sought to *destroy Republicanism*, and restore Royalty; thus, detesting in France what they approved in Poland. He concluded, by an assertion, that both these undertakings owed their birth to the same principle—a desire of preying on both countries. What would you think, Rev. Gentlemen, of roasting this offender, as your founder Calvin did his opponent?

